

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1-3 and 6-9, as shown below, in which insertions are underlined and deletions are indicated with strikethrough or brackets. Please add new claims 10-15 as shown below. The following listing replaces all previous versions, and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) Ultrasonic washing apparatus for ultrasonic washing of an object to be washed by putting it into a washing tank containing deaerated cleaning liquid, said apparatus comprising:

a washing tank having side walls with an inlet opening and an outlet opening formed therein for charging and discharging the object to be washed in and out of the washing tank, wherein said inlet and outlet are provided with closable doors,

an ultrasonic oscillator which generates ultrasonic waves in the washing tank;

a shifting mechanism for shifting the position of an object to be washed, wherein said shifting mechanism ~~is capable of charging~~ charges the object to be washed into the washing tank from a side of the washing tank and discharging the object to be washed in the washing tank toward a side of the washing tank and is provided ~~in the vicinities of~~ near said inlet and outlet,

a storage tank for temporarily storing cleaning liquid, and

a cleaning liquid flow control mechanism for controlling flow of cleaning liquid in said apparatus, wherein said flow control mechanism is operable to set a resting level of the cleaning liquid below the heights of the inlet and the outlet by shifting the cleaning liquid in the washing tank to ~~[[a]]~~ the storage tank at ~~[[the]]~~ a time of putting the object to be washed into the washing tank through the inlet and at ~~[[the]]~~ a time of discharging the object in the washing tank through

the outlet, and to set a working level of the cleaning liquid above the heights of the inlet and the outlet by shifting the cleaning liquid from the storage tank to the washing tank at the time of washing the object; wherein

the ultrasonic oscillator is operable to emit an ultrasonic wave toward the cleaning liquid.

2. (Currently amended) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a plurality of auxiliary tanks ~~[[of]]~~ having substantially ~~[[the]]~~ a same shape and configuration as the washing tank, wherein the auxiliary tanks are arranged along one line beside the inlet and outlet of said washing tank, wherein each of the washing tank and these auxiliary tanks are disposed with their respective inlet and outlet openings arranged in mutually opposite positions, a common door is provided between each adjacent pair of these inlet and outlet openings, and wherein said apparatus is operable in a manner such that by opening or closing these doors said outlet and inlet openings are enabled to communicate with or are isolated from each other.

3. (Currently amended) An ultrasonic washing method, comprising the steps of:

putting an object to be washed from a side of a washing tank through an inlet formed in a first side wall of the washing tank, with ~~[[the]]~~ a level of ~~[[the]]~~ a cleaning liquid in the washing tank being kept below ~~[[the]]~~ a height of the inlet in the side wall of the washing tank;

closing the inlet with a door,

letting deaerated cleaning liquid into the washing tank after the inlet door has been closed,

emitting an ultrasonic wave toward the deaerated cleaning liquid.

ultrasonically washing the object within the washing tank,
removing some of the cleaning liquid from the washing tank to bring the level thereof to
a level below the height of an outlet formed in another side wall of the washing tank,
opening a door covering the outlet, and
discharging the washed object through the outlet.

4. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising expandable packing
material operatively associated with said inlet and with said outlet.

5. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 2, further comprising expandable packing
material operatively associated with said inlet and with said outlet of each of said washing and
auxiliary tanks.

6. (Currently amended) An ultrasonic washing apparatus, comprising:

a washing tank having side walls and a floor cooperating to define a washing chamber,
said washing tank having an inlet opening formed in a first of said side walls and an outlet
opening formed in a second of said side walls;

an inlet door operatively associated with the inlet opening;

an outlet door operatively associated with the outlet opening;

a shifting mechanism for shifting ~~[[the]]~~ a position of an object to be washed, wherein
said shifting mechanism ~~is capable of charging~~ charges the object to be washed into the washing
tank from a side of the washing tank and discharging the object to be washed ~~[[in]]~~ from the
washing tank ~~toward a side of the washing tank~~ through the outlet opening, and is provided ~~in the~~

~~vicinities of~~ near said inlet and outlet,

a storage tank for temporarily storing cleaning liquid,

an ultrasonic signal generator disposed with the washing tank, said ultrasonic signal generator generates an ultrasonic signal toward the cleaning liquid; and

a cleaning liquid flow control mechanism for controlling flow of cleaning liquid in said apparatus, wherein said flow control mechanism is operable to set a resting level of the cleaning liquid by shifting cleaning liquid from the washing tank to a storage tank at ~~[[the]]~~ time of putting the object to be washed into the washing tank through the inlet and at ~~[[the]]~~ time of discharging the object ~~[[in]]~~ from the washing tank through the outlet, and to set a working level of the cleaning liquid by shifting cleaning liquid from the storage tank to the washing tank in preparation for washing the object; wherein

said resting level of the cleaning liquid is at a level below the inlet and outlet openings.

7. (Currently amended) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising:

a plurality of auxiliary tanks of substantially similar shape and size as the washing tank, each of the auxiliary tanks having an inlet opening and an outlet opening formed in opposed side walls thereof, wherein the auxiliary tanks are arranged substantially in line with the inlet opening and outlet opening of said washing tank, ~~wherein each of the washing tank and these auxiliary tanks are disposed with their respective~~ such that the inlet and outlet openings of the washing tank are arranged in mutually opposite positions with the outlet opening of one said auxiliary tank and the inlet opening of another said auxiliary tank, respectively, and

a common door provided between each adjacent pair of these inlet and outlet openings,

wherein said apparatus is operable in a manner such that by opening these common doors, said adjacent outlet and inlet openings are enabled to communicate with each other, and by closing these common doors, said adjacent inlet and outlet openings are isolated from each other.

8. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 6, further comprising expandable and compressible packing material operatively associated with said inlet ~~and with said~~ outlet openings.

9. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 7, further comprising expandable and compressible packing material operatively associated with said inlet ~~and with said~~ outlet openings of each of said washing and auxiliary tanks.

10. (New) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said shifting mechanism shifts the object in conjunction with opening and closing of said doors.

11. (New) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said doors are closed during a cleaning operation.

12. (New) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said ultrasonic oscillator is provided with said washing tank.

13. (New) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said shifting mechanism shifts the object in conjunction with opening and closing of said doors.

14. (New) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said doors are closed during a cleaning operation.

15. (New) The ultrasonic washing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said ultrasonic signal generator is provided with said washing tank.